



## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Tribal Sport Fishing Programs Arizona Fishery Resources Office

### Issue:

Native American Tribal sport fishing programs are an important source of revenue for Native American Tribes and neighboring communities, and pays for salaries of Tribal Natural Resource Department employees that assist the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in meeting our national goals and objectives. In addition, Tribal sport fishing programs represent the foundation of long-standing partnerships between the Service and Native American Tribes.

Tribal partners have identified continued support and management of their cold- and warmwater sport fishing programs as their highest priorities for technical fishery assistance from the Arizona Fishery Resources Office (AZFRO). The success of Tribal sport fishing programs is dependent upon both the Service's continued supply of fish and management assistance. However, the future production and availability of fish for Tribal sport fishing programs is in question because of decreasing spring flows at hatcheries as a result of an ongoing drought in the southwestern United States. In addition, the availability of resources that can be devoted to fishery management to Tribes has either decreased or remained steady, whereas requests for technical fishery assistance have increased. From a management perspective, the questions become "will future supplies of fish meet angler demands?" and "how can we assist Tribes in best managing available resources to meet angler demands?"

### Accomplishments:

In FY 2003, AZFRO, in cooperation with Alchesay-Williams Creek, Willow Beach, and Inks Dam National Fish Hatcheries, coordinated and assisted with the stocking of over one million cold- and warmwater fish into Tribal waters. In addition, AZFRO, with assistance from Tribal personnel, completed lake and stream surveys on the San Carlos Apache Reservation, White Mountain Apache Reservation, and Navajo Nation; assisted the White Mountain Apache Tribe's, Wildlife and Outdoor Recreation Division with developing an angler survey and subsequent database for several sport fishing program lakes; evaluated the effectiveness of aerators on improving summer survival of trout stocked in the spring; estimated overwinter survival and growth of different strains and sizes of fall-stocked brown and rainbow trout; and examined the effects of Coolidge Dam operations on the largemouth bass fishery in San Carlos Lake located on the San Carlos Apache Reservation.

### Future Outlook:

In order for Tribal sport fishing programs to remain successful in the future and for Tribes to experience the full benefits of their sport fishing programs, increased efforts need to be dedicated in support of these Tribal programs. This includes supplying additional cold- and warmwater fish, assisting Tribes in developing Fish Management Plans that include recommendations for the best management of each water body, and evaluating the success of hatchery stockings in meeting Tribal sport fishing program management goals through creel and comprehensive reservoir and stream surveys.

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*Tribal waters in AZ receive largemouth bass and channel catfish from Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery located in Burnet, TX.*



*Lake surveys are one way of providing technical fishery assistance to Native American Tribes.*



*Biologists "mark" fish prior to stocking to evaluate their survival in Tribal waters.*